



SUMMER 2015
VOLUME 25 ISSUE 3

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AMBS window

READ THE BIBLE WITH US

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

I was studying at a seminary in California when in 1976 some U.S. evangelicals declared a “Battle for the Bible.” The lines were drawn, and heated arguments ensued. Battles about the Bible’s authority and relevance continue today. There is still widespread refutation and accusation around who is more or less biblical, faithful and righteous.

I am so happy to work in a learning community where, rather than feeling threatened or disheartened by the battles over the Bible in the wider church, we sink our roots deeply into its wellsprings of life. Like a tree planted by the streams, the AMBS community enjoys the sweet fruits of the wisdom of the Scriptures brought into places of hunger, despair, crisis and confusion.

The Anabaptists rediscovered the precious and revolutionary story of Jesus in the Scriptures. They experienced new birth. The Spirit lit within them an irrepressible joy and hope that led them to form communities of radical disciples who became courageous witnesses and agents of change.

AMBS invites everyone, no matter where we stand on disputed issues, to humbly and eagerly read the Bible with us—the Bible in conversation with good environmental science, social science, intercultural and conflict studies.



A world beleaguered by environmental travail is in need of skilled leaders committed to renew creation, God’s wondrous gift to us. In a world where many persons are violently displaced, or in desperation choose to migrate, we need inter-culturally adept community leaders who offer the Spirit’s pentecost hospitality. For a world where conflict and oppression rob many of God’s beloved children of their birthright, we need just and compassionate leaders like Jesus with a vision for God’s shalom.

This year’s graduates described “sweet fruits” they enjoyed at AMBS. One said: I’m a different person than a few years

ago. I’ve become more confident in my own voice. My profs pushed me not to stay on the fence, but to take a stand.

Another: Thank you for the hospitality, wisdom and formation I experienced while here. I’m a different person, in a good way.

Another: I didn’t want to come to seminary. I was scared, thinking this place is so intellectual that a normal person like me wouldn’t fit in. What I found is people who love God and love learning; normal, real people. This isn’t just a place that’s strong academically. It is also a strong community, a holistic community that knows how to laugh, play, eat and worship together.

And another said, with tears: I’ve identified what this yearning within me is about; it’s a yearning for God’s Shalom. Thank you for helping me to see that’s what I’ve been wanting for myself and others. ●

Photo above: At the commissioning service on May 22, graduates lit candles while the congregation sang a blessing for them.

Fifteen graduates honored

Fifteen graduates were honored at the AMBS commencement service on May 23, 2015. They received the following degrees and certificates.

MDiv Master of Divinity
MAPS Master of Arts: Peace Studies
MACF Master of Arts in Christian Formation
Certificate in Theological Studies

Jon Byler. *MDiv.* Will continue as associate pastor of Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church where he has been serving since 2005. He and Deborah, his wife, have two children and eight grandchildren.

Andrea Baker Dean. *MDiv.* Will enter a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) internship in the fall at Loyola University Medical Center, Maywood, Ill. She is married to Danny Dean. She is an associate member of Chicago Community Mennonite Church and has been attending Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

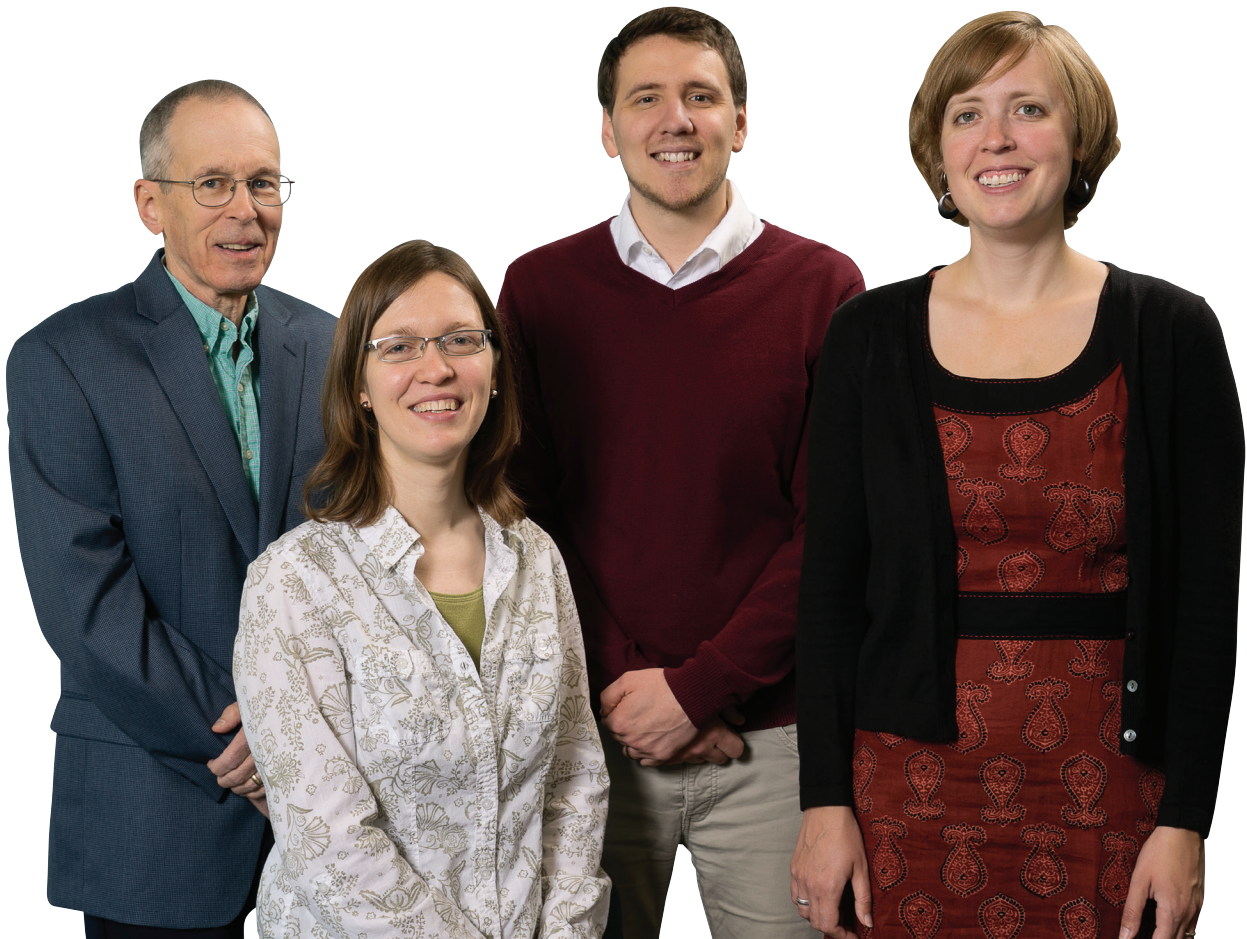
Taylor Dwyer-Zeman. *MAPS.* Exploring vocational options in conflict mediation, residential community leadership and social justice in Fort Wayne, Ind., where Katie, his wife, has accepted a director position at the University of St. Francis. He is a member of 509 Community in Huntington, Ind.

Austin Ellsworth. *Certificate in Theological Studies.* Working as a

maintenance technician for a student housing complex in East Lansing, Mich. He is married to Allison Ellsworth.

Katherine Goerzen. *MDiv.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment and currently serving part-time as coordinator of AMBS Kansas Center. She and Peter, her husband, also a 2015 graduate, are members of Tabor Mennonite Church, Goessel, Kan. They have two children.

Peter Goerzen. *MDiv.* Will continue as campus pastor and director of church relations at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. He and Katherine, his wife, who is also a 2015 graduate, are members of Tabor Mennonite Church, Goessel, Kan. They have two children.



Jon Byler, Andrea Baker Dean, Taylor Dwyer-Zeman, Katherine Goerzen. Not pictured: Austin Ellsworth

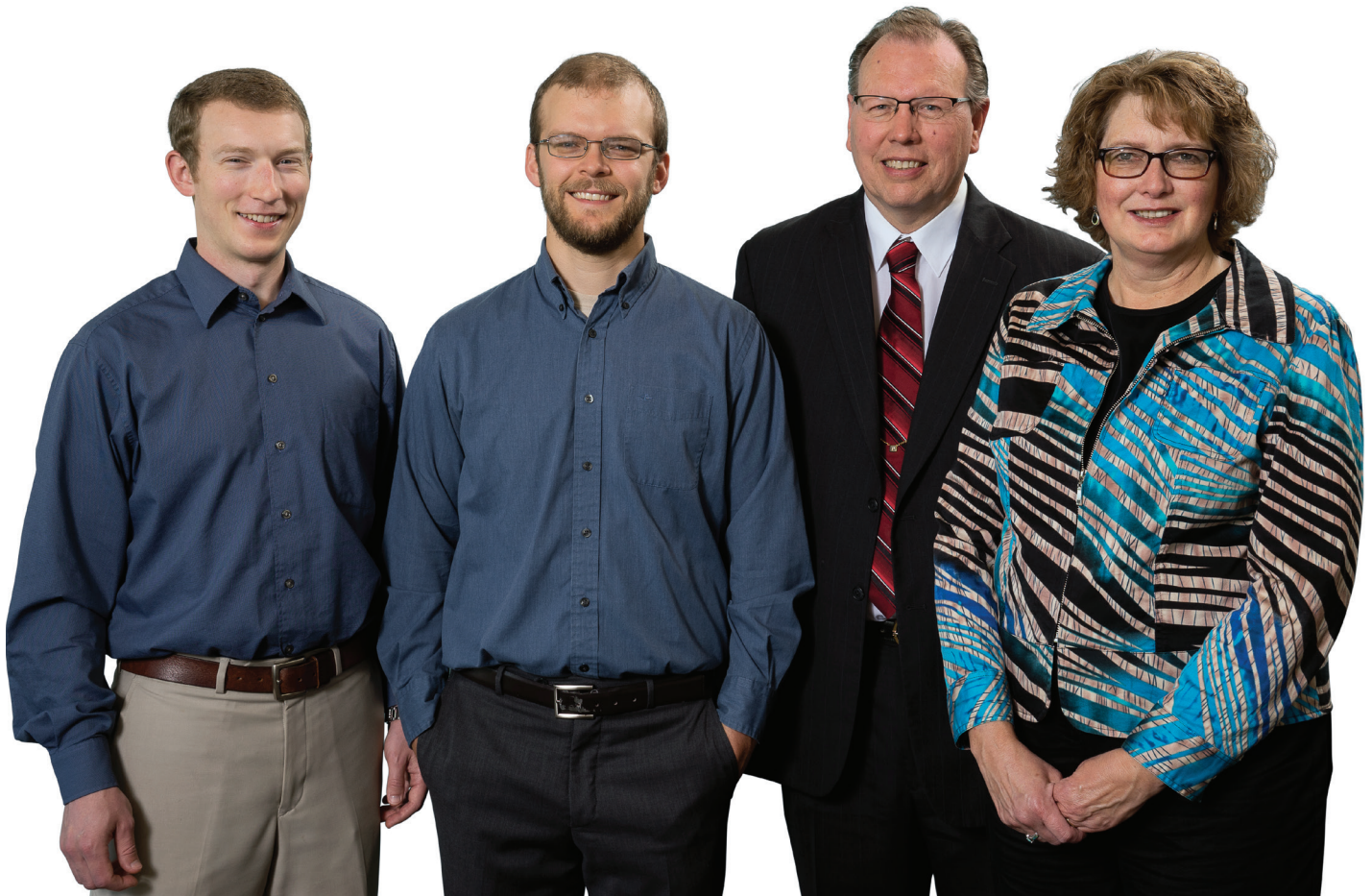
Ryan Harker. *MDiv with a concentration in biblical studies.* Will serve as a sessional instructor at AMBS in fall, teaching Beginning Greek, and will apply to doctoral programs in New Testament. Ryan is married to Brenna Harker and during his studies has attended Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Galen Penner. *MDiv.* Will continue as pastor of Rochester Mennonite Church, Rochester, Minn.

Debra Smith. *MDiv.* Will begin in July as pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. She currently is a member of Covenant United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne.



Graduates respond to the charge they received from Academic Dean Rebecca Slough during the Commencement service.



Peter Goerzen, Ryan Harker, Galen Penner, Debra Smith

2015 GRADUATES

Michael Swartzendruber. *MDiv.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. He is a member of First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, Iowa. His parents are Larry and Connie Swartzendruber of Kalona.

Eugene Thieszen. *Certificate in Theological Studies.* Will continue as half-time pastor of Hanston Mennonite Church, Hanston, Kan.

Jennifer (Jenny) Weaver. *MDiv.* Senior pastor at Epworth Memorial United Methodist Church in South Bend, Ind. She is a member of the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Eliza Wertenberger. *MDiv.* Pursuing hospital chaplaincy. She is a member of Columbus Mennonite Church, Columbus, Ohio.

Rhonda Yoder. *MACF.* Exploring pastoral ministry opportunities. She is married to Roger C. Yoder and is a member of East Goshen Mennonite Church.

Michael Yordy. *MDiv.* Pursuing church planting in the Goshen, Ind., area. He is a member of Waterford Mennonite Church. ●

VOCATIONS OF 2015 GRADS

Graduates are involved in or are pursuing these ministries:

Pastoral ministry (congregational and college)	10
Chaplaincy	2
Teaching/Doctoral studies	1
Community leadership for justice and conflict mediation	1
Other	1



Michael Swartzendruber, Jennifer Weaver, Rhonda Yoder, Michael Yordy. Not pictured: Eugene Thieszen, Eliza Wertenberger.

Graduates equipped for a harvest of justice

In her commencement address on May 23, the day before Pentecost, Nancy Bedford reminded graduates of AMBS that the Holy Spirit will be with them as they go into ministry.

Bedford, who is Georgia Harkness Professor of Applied Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill., drew on the third chapter of James to talk about wisdom that comes from God. She wove together metaphors of planting and harvesting and themes of peace and justice.

"You certainly have a lot of formal instruction under your belts," Bedford said. "And yet, as useful as all that is, it doesn't quite add up to wisdom. For all your acquired knowledge to be transmuted to a wisdom that builds up others and contributes to systemic change, it needs to be embedded in practices of peace, compassion, humility and honesty—all of which are only possible with the help and agency of God's spirit."

She cautioned, however, that these good gifts are often threatened by partiality, hypocrisy and self-conceit, which she called "invasive species coming into the garden, choking out the good wisdom we are trying to cultivate."

She told the graduates, "You are equipped to contribute to a harvest of



Nancy Bedford encouraged the graduates with the reminder that the Holy Spirit wants to do a new thing through them in the world. Dr. Bedford, who presented the commencement address, is a professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, with whom AMBS has a partnership to prepare United Methodist pastors.

justice because you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit who wants to do a new thing in this world."

Rebecca Slough, academic dean, presented the charge to the graduates. She reminded them of Jesus' command to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor

as yourself. "These commandments of love form a holistic spirituality. Living the good news of God's reign requires your willingness to be swept up into this trinity of love for God and neighbor and self," she said. "I charge you to do this, and you will live." ●

Faculty present graduate awards

AMBS faculty present awards to selected graduates each year at the Dean's Breakfast the day before commencement. Awards include subscriptions to journals, gift certificates at the Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore and registration at future Church Leadership Center events. This year's recipients are:

Jon Byler, Gertrude Roten Award for excellence in Greek exegesis

Taylor Dwyer-Zeman, Award for excellence in peace studies

Andrea Baker Dean, Marlin E. Miller Award for excellence in theological studies

Katherine Goerzen, Marlin E. Miller Award for excellence in theological studies and Award for excellence in Christian formation

Peter Goerzen, Marlin E. Miller Award for excellence in theological studies and Award for excellence in preaching

Ryan Harker, Millard Lind Award for excellence in biblical interpretation and Heart of the Community Award ●



Graduate Peter Goerzen, accompanied by Nathan, his son, received the award for excellence in preaching from Allan Rudy-Froese, assistant professor of Christian proclamation.

Journey develops leaders centered in Jesus Christ



Several of the participants who are completing Journey this summer say that the ministry development program has given them a clearer sense of God's call. "The most important benefit I gained from Journey is now I am more confident and equipped to do the ministry work that God has placed me on," Ram (Amos) Shakya says.

Reneda Miller agrees: "I have a better understanding of what I believe and why, and I've discovered what God has gifted me for and what he is calling me to do."

Journey: A Conference-based Leadership Develop Program is administered by the AMBS Church Leadership Center in partnership with Indiana-Michigan and Central District Conferences. It is designed to develop Christ-centered leaders grounded in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology.

Since its beginning in 2003, 36 people have completed Journey's six units of undergraduate study. This summer, Illinois, Central District and Indiana-Michigan Conferences will recognize the seven who are completing the program in the 2014-15 year (see list at right).

With support from conference leaders, the Journey program is open to people in any conference of Mennonite Church USA and area church of Mennonite Church Canada. For details, visit www.amsb.edu/journey •

Journey participants Bill Newman, Melika Hershberger, Tyrone Taylor and Shawn Lange share reflections on ministry during a Journey Weekend Learning Experience.

Participants completing Journey this summer

Illinois Mennonite Conference

Ram (Amos) K. Shakya, Living Water Community Church.
Mentor: **Tim Peebles**

Central District Conference

Brian Miller, Oak Grove Mennonite Church. Mentor: **Doug Zehr**

Reneda Miller, Oak Grove Mennonite Church. Mentor: **Doug Zehr**

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

Shawn A Lange Sr., New Foundation United in Christ Mennonite Fellowship
Mentor: **Keith Kingsley**, Fellowship of Hope

Brian Martin, Kern Road Mennonite Church. Mentor: **Dave Sutter**

Bill Newman, True Vine Tabernacle
Mentor: **Nancy Rodriguez-Lora**

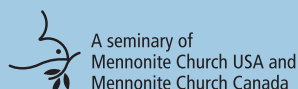
Tyrone Taylor, New Foundation United in Christ Mennonite Fellowship.
Mentor: **Keith Kingsley**, Fellowship of Hope

AMBS Window SUMMER 2015 Volume 25 Issue 3

Distributed three times a year as a supplement to *Canadian Mennonite* and *The Mennonite*. Editor: **Mary E. Klassen**
Designer: **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis**.
Photos: **Steve Echols**, **Mary E. Klassen**, **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis**.

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ALUMNI NEWS

Charleen (Master of Divinity 2007) and **Kendall Jongejan Harder (Master of Divinity 2007)** were ordained at ValleyView Mennonite Church, London, Ont., Nov. 16, 2014.

SunJu Moon (Master of Divinity 2011) is the first credentialed Mennonite woman pastor in South Korea. Central District Conference and the Korean Anabaptist Fellowship shared in her credentialing.

David Kratz Mathies (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 1995), associate professor at Missouri Western State University, published his first

book, *Common Grounds without Foundations: A Pragmatic Approach to Ethical Disagreements across Cultural, Philosophical, and Religious Traditions*.

Eileen Saner (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 1995), director of library services, and **Daniel Schipani (Master of Arts in Religion 1974)**, professor of pastoral care and counseling, were honored for 30 years at AMBS.

Bob Yoder (Master of Divinity 2001) recently published *Helping Youth Grieve: The Good News of Biblical Lament with Wipf and Stock*. •

Serving the church 2014-15

Across the continent and in our neighborhoods



AMBS cohosts African-American Mennonite leaders

AMBS joined Mennonite Mission Network and the African American Mennonite Association to host a two-day African American Mennonite Pastors Gathering in April. About 30 participants worshiped together, shared stories of ministries and challenges, and learned about resources from denominational organizations.

Visit www.mennonitemission.net and search for “Black leaders” to read a news story about the gathering.

View a photo gallery of participants at AMBS: <http://on.fb.me/> ●

Tantra Taylor (right) from New Foundation United in Christ Mennonite Fellowship and a participant in Journey, talks with Rose Stutzman, staff member of MennoMedia,

Approval for Canadians to join MDiv Connect

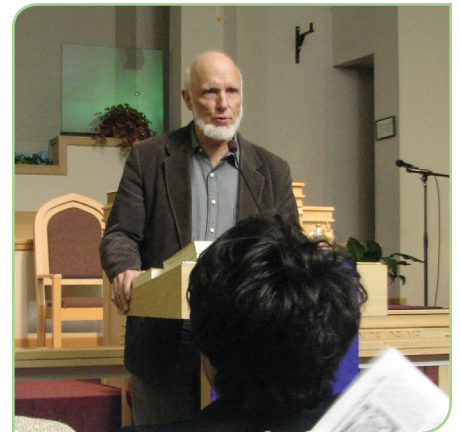
AMBS received approval for students from Canada to enroll in Master of Divinity Connect, our distance program. Border-crossing issues for the one-week visits to campus have been resolved. Canadians now can complete most of their study at home, coming to campus for brief visits two or three times a year.

Canadians pay tuition costs on par. In addition, students at Conrad Grebel University College and Canadian Mennonite University receive a 50 percent tuition discount on master’s online courses. Read more details: www.ambs.edu/news/Approval-for-Canadians-to-join-MDiv-Connect.cfm ●

Hmong leaders join AMBS classes

Twelve pastors and leaders in Hmong congregations participated in an introductory online AMBS course during the fall 2014 semester. These students are members of Hmong Mennonite congregations in Minnesota, North Carolina and Wisconsin.

The course engaged students in theological study and reflection on their spiritual journeys, with David Boshart, conference minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference, as the instructor. Eight of these students have applied to continue studies at AMBS, joining online and hybrid class offerings. ●



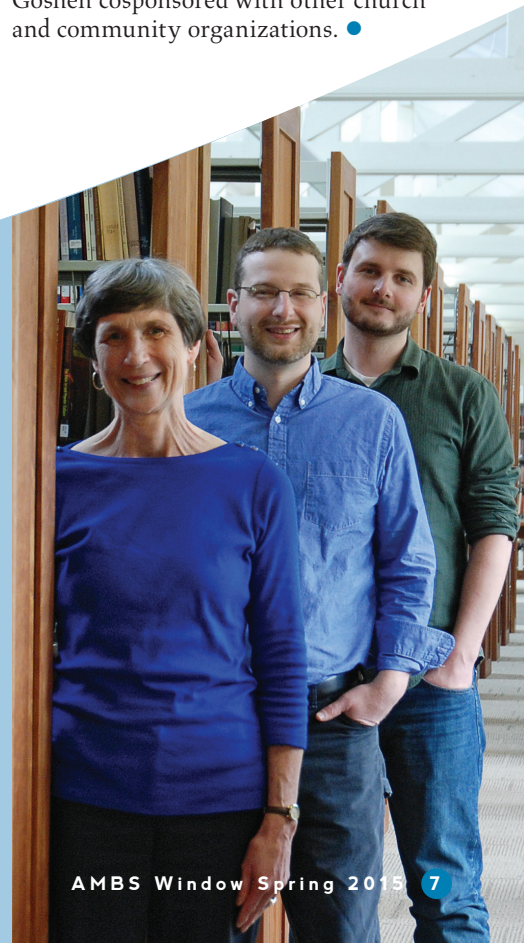
Speaker shares anti-racist education strategies

James Loewen, PhD, a leading educator on “sundown towns”—jurisdictions that excluded African Americans and other groups—met with faculty and students in March. Drawing on decades of teaching in the areas of sociology, history and race relations, Dr. Loewen shared strategies he has used to create fairer classroom spaces and to encourage cross-cultural engagement among students. His time to AMBS was one session in a two-day visit to Elkhart and Goshen cosponsored with other church and community organizations. ●

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

The AMBS Library is filled with books—of course. Increasingly it also offers electronic resources for ministry and theological study. Students in Master of Divinity Connect, who study from their home contexts, and other online students have access to high-quality research materials because of the Library’s subscriptions to full-text journal articles and e-books. For alumni, AMBS provides ATLASerials, full-text articles useful for preparing sermons, Bible studies and other ministry needs.

Even more important for the growing number of distance learners is the library staff. **Eileen Saner**, director of library services (left), **Karl Stutzman**, assistant director of digital library services (center), and **Brandon Board**, library services technician (right), are adept at teaching students how to find and use electronic resources available from varied sources. Thank you for your gifts to support these essential ingredients of seminary learning. ●



AMBS PANORAMA

Rooted and Grounded

AMBS will host a second Rooted and Grounded conference on land and Christian discipleship, October 1–3. Featured speakers are Wilma Bailey, Sylvia Keesmaat and Ched Myers. Additional information is available at www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded

Advanced Spiritual Guidance Seminar

A seminar to foster maturity in spiritual direction will meet four times over ten months at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, starting fall 2015. It is open to directors who have training and have been offering direction for at least two years. For information, visit www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/Advanced-Spiritual-Guidance-Seminar.cfm

Library resources for ministry

Explore e-books and online journals available from the library at AMBS in a five-month, online seminar starting

in August. Benefit from the librarians' guidance, share learning with other participants and respond to their work. To register, visit www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/research-for-ministry.cfm

Pastors Week 2015

Pastors Week, January 25–28, 2016, will focus on bringing the Bible to life in the congregation. Watch for announcements on the Pastors Week web page: www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek

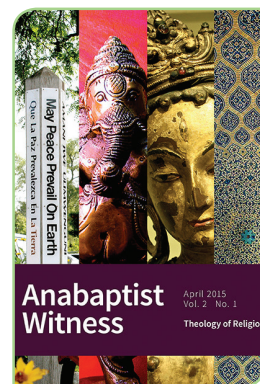
September 25 visit day

The first Seminary Preview Day set for fall semester will be Friday, September 25. Encourage someone with gifts for ministry to plan a campus visit. Learn more: www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS

Faculty publications

This year faculty and staff published seven books, four journal volumes, and a long list of essays, as well as presenting a variety of lectureships. Read the entire

list of faculty and staff scholarship online: www.ambs.edu/publishing/Faculty-scholarship.cfm



Anabaptist Witness: Second volume online

The second issue of *Anabaptist Witness* focuses on what interaction with people of other religious faiths might look like for Anabaptists.

Essays explore the field of the “theology of religions.” Read the issue online or learn how to purchase a copy:

www.anabaptistwitness.org ●

ALUMNI RECOGNITION 2015



Obed Dashan, pastor and church leader in Nigeria, is receiving the 2015 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition.

Obed earned a Master of Divinity from AMBS in 1990. He also completed Clinical Pastoral Education, studied at the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) in Chicago,

and completed a Doctor of Ministry degree from McCormick Theological Seminary.

Obed's ministry includes teaching and administration at Gindiri Theological Seminary for 16 years and serving as a pastor with the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) (formerly Church of Christ in Nigeria). He was general secretary of the church from 2011 to May 2014 when he was elected vice president. Obed oversees 85 regional church councils in the church of two million members.

In the last several years, as the Boko Haram group has targeted Christian churches and institutions in northern Nigeria, Obed has drawn deeply on the peace theology he learned at AMBS. Much of his ministry is encouraging his people to live faithfully in the midst of persecution.

He says, “Ministry here is living each day at a time. When you go out and come back alive, you praise God. Here, I

include death in my daily budget. That helps me to live each day aware that I am a sojourner here and cannot hold on to the world as if it will not end.”

In the face of these challenges, Obed says it is God's word and the stories of Jesus and Paul that sustain him. “I anchor my life in my relationship with God and entrust my life into his life and ask for his daily presence and peace.”

Phena, Obed's wife, also earned an MDiv at AMBS, completing studies in 1991. Their two sons were young boys when the family came to AMBS; their daughter was born in their apartment on the campus.

When asked how others can pray for him and his ministry, Obed suggested we pray for faith to sustain him in the midst of great challenges; for courage to love those who are persecuting the church; for protection as he travels around the country; and for his ministry of raising up leaders and expanding evangelism efforts in other countries. ●